



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Protecting Important Papers and Records

- If all or part of your home was destroyed by a disaster event, you could likewise lose important papers and records including family pictures and other items having sentimental value. You have several choices to protect these items:
 - Place them (or a copy) in a safety deposit box.
 - Place them (or a copy) in a fire-proof metal container that can be taken with you when evacuating your home.
 - Store appropriate items on a computer disk that can be kept at the home of a friend or family member. Similarly, photocopies of important papers could likewise be stored in a file folder with a friend or family member.
- Important papers that you should seek to protect include:
 - Household inventories
 - Insurance policies – An inventory of all insurance policies including policy and telephone numbers
 - Financial records – Bank and credit card account and telephone numbers, stock and bond certificates, and any contracts, notes and debts
 - Tax returns – Copy of the returns and accompanying papers for at least five years
 - Legal records – Copy of will, living will, durable power of attorney, etc.
 - Family records – Birth certificates, adoption papers, church records, marriage records, divorce decrees, military records, passports, social security cards, immunization and other health records
 - Property records – Automobile title and bill of sales, real estate deeds and mortgages and records of improvement, burial plot deeds
- Rent a safe deposit box at a bank to store original documents, including:
 - Birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, divorce papers, military records, and passports.
 - Negatives for irreplaceable personal photographs, protected in plastic sleeves
 - Appraisals of expensive jewelry
 - Stock and bond certificates
 - Deeds and titles
 - Copies of wills, power of attorney, etc
 - Insurance policies

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Illinois Extension Service entitled “Household and Personal Property Inventory Book”